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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: STATE AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHT A/S  
SULLIVAN'S VISIT, POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH UNITED STATES

¶1. (U) State media positively highlighted U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs Daniel Sullivan's participation in the August 13 inauguration ceremony of the Imamnazar border checkpoint on the Turkmen-Afghan border and his August 14 meeting with Turkmenistan's President. Leading international news agencies carried Assistant Secretary Sullivan's speech from August 14 at the Ak Altyn Hotel in Ashgabat, in which he stressed "openness, economic integration, and partnership" with Turkmenistan.

STATE MEDIA HIGHLIGHT SULLIVAN'S MEETING WITH TURKMEN LEADER

¶2. (U) On August 11, state dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 39,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 28,091) gave front-page treatment to an article announcing the Sullivan delegation's arrival in Turkmenistan to participate in the opening ceremony of the "Imamnazar" border crossing checkpoint between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. The article also noted that Sullivan expected to meet Turkmenistan's president.

¶3. (U) On August 14, "Watan" TV news program (Turkmen) praised President Berdimuhammedov's meeting with the U.S. delegation, headed by Assistant Secretary Sullivan, noting that the sides discussed a wide range of issues for cooperation, including partnership in the oil and gas sector. The broadcast showed Sullivan's support for President Berdimuhammedov's intention to diversify its gas and oil export routes. It also praised educational exchange programs to the United States. Sullivan's comments were broadcast and translated accurately and carried in their entirety. The same day, the pro-government website 'Turkmenistan.ru' posted a positive article on the meeting, praising Berdimuhammedov and Sullivan's support for diversifying the bilateral partnership. The article was similar to the "Watan" TV news broadcast. The following day, state dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 39,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 28,091) also published an article with similar content from "Watan" news. In subsequent days, state weeklies "Balkan" (Turkmen, circ. 25,630), "Watan" (Turkmen, circ. 26,091), "Ahal Durmushy" (Turkmen, circ. 34,091) and "Esger" (Turkmen, circ. 58,591) reprinted the article from state dailies. The government news website 'Turkmenistan-Golden Age' (Russian, English and Turkmen) posted the dailies' article as well. The Russian news agency 'ITAR-TASS' (Russian, English) also carried a favorable

article on Sullivan's meeting with Turkmenistan's President.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CARRY SULLIVAN'S REMARKS ON NEED FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS IN TURKMENISTAN

¶4. (U) On August 14, news agencies Associated Press (AP) (English, Russian) and Reuters (English, Russian) covered Sullivan's remarks on transparency, rule-of-law, and transportation and communications links in advancing the development of Turkmenistan and other countries in the region. AP and Reuters tended to focus their coverage on the energy trade issues. AP reported Sullivan's visit came amid continued jockeying between the United States and Russian for influence in Turkmenistan and an apparent diplomatic push by Washington to seek backing for Trans-Caspian pipeline, which would circumvent export routes controlled by Russia. Reuters reported that the United States urged Turkmenistan to diversify its energy export routes. Both news agencies accurately carried Sullivan's statement that "Nations should never be left with only one option - one market, one trading partner, one vital infrastructure link." Sullivan's remarks, urging Turkmenistan to do more to fight corruption and improve its investment climate received positive coverage. (NOTE: The news agencies carried quotes from the full text of Sullivan's August 14 remarks, which has been distributed to international stringers and posted on the Embassy website. END NOTE.)

MEDIA FAVORABLY CARRY SULLIVAN'S REMARKS FROM NEW BORDER CHECKPOINT OPENING CEREMONY

¶5. (U) On August 10, the Russia-based news agency 'Interfax' (Russian, English) reported on Sullivan's upcoming arrival to attend the Imamnazar border crossing checkpoint opening ceremony. The report noted that Sullivan was expected to hold a meeting with Turkmenistan's government officials on August 14. 'Interfax' repeated the same report on August 12 and 'Central Asia General

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Newswire' reprinted the 'Interfax' report.

¶6. (U) "Watan" TV news August 14 broadcast of the Imamnazar checkpoint's opening carried Sullivan's interview from the event. Sullivan emphasized the occasion had significant implications for Turkmenistan and the United States and noted that the United States wants to help with regional integration. Similarly, state dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 39,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 28,091) published an article on the opening, favorably noting Assistant Secretary Sullivan's remarks at the event. News of the event was also posted on government news website 'Turkmenistan-Golden Age' (Russian, English and Turkmen)

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: State media praised Assistant Secretary Sullivan's visit and took efforts to show President Berdimuhamedov's support for improved Turkmen-American relations. Meanwhile, international news agencies such as the 'Associated Press' and 'Reuters' characterized the event in the context of the United States competing with Russia over influence for Turkmenistan's energy resources. The extensive and favorable coverage by state news media is an indication that the country's leadership continues to support a positive image of Turkmenistan's improving foreign relations, including with the United States.

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